

are overturned on appeal by SBA's Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA) or by SBA as part of an SDB protest.

**§ 124.1008 How does a firm become certified as an SDB?**

Any firm may apply to be certified as an SDB. SBA's field offices will provide further information and required application forms to any firm interested in SDB certification. In order to become certified as an SDB, a firm must apply to SBA or, if directed by SBA, to a Private Certifier. The application must include evidence demonstrating that the firm is owned and controlled by one or more individuals claiming disadvantaged status, along with certifications or narratives regarding the disadvantaged status of such individuals. See paragraph (e)(1) of this section. The firm also must submit information necessary for a size determination. See § 121.1008. Current 8(a) BD Participants do not need to submit applications for SDB status. These concerns automatically qualify as SDBs by virtue of their status as 8(a) BD concerns. An 8(a) Participant's continuing eligibility as an SDB will be reviewed as part of the concern's 8(a) annual review.

(a) *Filing an SDB application.* (1) An interested firm must first submit a complete application to SBA's Assistant Administrator for Small Disadvantaged Business Certification and Eligibility (AA/SDBCE), Small Business Administration, 409 3rd Street, SW, Washington, DC 20416, or to a specific SBA field office or an approved Private Certifier if directed by SBA.

(2) The firm must identify which individual(s) or entities are claiming disadvantaged status.

(b) *Required forms.* Each firm seeking to be certified as an SDB must submit those forms and attachments required by SBA when applying for admission to the 8(a) BD program. These forms and attachments may include, but not be limited to, financial statements, Federal personal and business tax returns and personal history statements. The application package may be in the form of an electronic application.

(c) *Application processing.* (1) SBA or a Private Certifier will advise each applicant generally within 15 days after the receipt of an application whether the

application is complete and suitable for evaluation and, if not, what additional information or clarification is required. If the application is not complete, SBA or the Private Certifier will return the application to the firm, and will notify the firm that it may re-apply when its application is complete.

(2) The burden is on the applicant to demonstrate that those individuals claiming disadvantaged status own and control the concern.

(d) *Ownership and control decision.* SBA or a Private Certifier will determine whether those individuals claiming disadvantaged status own and control the applicant firm within 30 days of receipt of a complete application package, whenever practicable..

(1) Where a Private Certifier determines ownership and control, the Private Certifier will issue a written decision as to whether the applicant is owned and controlled by the individuals identified as claiming disadvantaged status.

(i) If the Private Certifier finds that the applicant is owned and controlled by the individuals claiming disadvantaged status, the Private Certifier will forward the application to SBA along with a copy of its ownership and control determination and the information required by paragraph (e)(2)(ii) of this section, where appropriate.

(ii) If the Private Certifier finds that the applicant is not owned and controlled by the individuals claiming disadvantaged status, its decision must state the specific reasons for the finding, and inform the applicant of its right to appeal the decision to SBA pursuant to § 124.1009.

(2) Where SBA determines ownership and control, SBA will first determine whether the applicant is owned and controlled by the individual(s) claiming to be disadvantaged. If SBA determines that the applicant is not owned and controlled by the individual(s) claiming disadvantaged status, SBA will issue a written decision addressing only the ownership and control issues. If SBA determines that the applicant is owned and controlled by the individual(s) claiming disadvantaged status, SBA will issue a single written decision as to whether the applicant qualifies as

an SDB. Such a determination will include the ownership and control of the firm, the size status of the firm, and the disadvantaged status of those individuals claiming to be disadvantaged.

(3) In its sole discretion, SBA may analyze and determine whether a firm is owned and controlled by one or more individuals claiming disadvantaged status notwithstanding the availability of a Private Certifier to make such a decision.

(4) SBA reserves the right to re-evaluate an approved decision on ownership and control by a Private Certifier in a case where it has credible evidence that the Private Certifier has substantially disregarded the eligibility criteria.

(e) *Disadvantaged determination.* Once a concern receives a decision finding that it is owned and controlled by those individuals or entities claiming disadvantaged status (either through an initial determination or on appeal), SBA will determine whether the other eligibility criteria are met, and, if so, will include the SDB on the SBA-maintained list of qualified SDBs. SBA will make this determination within 30 days of receiving an SDB application, if practicable.

(1) *Members of designated groups.* (i) Those individuals claiming disadvantaged status that are members of the same designated groups that are presumed to be socially disadvantaged for purposes of SBA's 8(a) BD program (see § 124.103(b)) are presumed to be socially and economically disadvantaged for purposes of SDB certification. These individuals must represent that they are members of one of the designated groups, that they are identified as a member of one of the designated groups, that their net worth is less than \$750,000 after taking into account the exclusions set forth in § 124.104(c)(2), and that they are citizens of the United States.

(ii) Absent credible evidence to the contrary, SBA may accept these representations as true and certify the firm as an SDB.

(2) *Individuals not members of designated groups.* (i) Each individual claiming disadvantaged status who is not a member of one of the designated groups must submit a statement iden-

tifying personally how his or her entry into or advancement in the business world has been impaired because of personally specific factors (see § 124.103(c)), and how his or her ability to compete in the free enterprise system has been impaired due to diminished capital and credit opportunities (see §§ 124.103(c) and 124.104).

(ii) Where a Private Certifier determines ownership and control, the Private Certifier must also review the disadvantaged status submission and any other required information, and send to SBA the following:

(A) An executive summary and analysis of the disadvantaged status submission;

(B) The application and all supporting documentation; and

(C) A certification that the application is complete and suitable for evaluation.

(3) *Concerns owned by tribes, ANCs, CDCs, or NHOs:* SBA will process SDB applications from concerns owned and controlled by tribes, ANCs, CDCs, or NHOs in the same way as those from concerns owned by individuals who are members of designated groups.

(f) *SDB Determination.* (1) If SBA's AA/SDBCE determines that the individual(s) claiming disadvantage are disadvantaged and other eligibility criteria are met, he or she will certify the firm as an SDB.

(2) If SBA's AA/SDBCE determines that one or more of the individuals claiming to be disadvantaged is not disadvantaged and their disadvantaged status is required to establish disadvantaged ownership and control of the applicant, or any of the other eligibility criteria are not met, he or she will reject the firm's application for SDB certification. The AA/SDBCE will issue a written decision setting forth SBA's reasons for decline.

(3) Pursuant to part 134 of this title, a firm may appeal to OHA the AA/SDBCE's decision that one or more of the individuals claiming disadvantaged status is not disadvantaged, or, where SBA determines ownership and control, that those claiming disadvantaged status do not own and control the applicant. (See § 124.1009 for appeals from decisions by Private Certifiers.)

(i) The firm must serve SBA's Associate General Counsel for General Law with a copy of the appeal.

(ii) OHA will determine whether SBA's decision in either case was arbitrary, capricious, or contrary to law. OHA's review is limited to the facts that were before SBA at the time of its decision and any arguments submitted in or in response to the appeal. OHA will not consider any facts beyond those that were already presented to SBA unless the administrative judge determines that manifest injustice would occur if the appeal were limited to the record.

(4) A firm may also request a formal size determination pursuant to part 121 of this title where SBA finds that the firm is not small.

(g) *Current 8(a) BD program participants.* Any firm that is currently a Participant in SBA's 8(a) BD program need not seek an ownership and control determination or apply to SBA for a separate certification as an SDB. SBA will certify current 8(a) BD Participants as SDBs, and automatically include them on the list of qualified SDBs.

(h) *8(a) BD graduates.* SBA will automatically certify a firm that has graduated from the SBA's 8(a) BD program to be an SDB, provided SBA determined that the firm continued to be eligible for the 8(a) BD program as part of an annual review within the last three years. (See § 124.1014(b)).

(i) *Certification by DOT recipient.* If a firm applying for SDB certification has a current, valid certification as a disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE) from a Department of Transportation (DOT) recipient, SBA may adopt the DBE certification as an SDB certification when determined by the AA/SDBCE or designee to be appropriate.

**§ 124.1009 How does a firm appeal a decision of a Private Certifier?**

Where a Private Certifier performs an ownership and control determination and finds that a firm is not owned and controlled by the individual(s) claiming disadvantaged status, the firm may appeal that decision to OHA pursuant to part 134 of this title. The firm must serve SBA's Associate General Counsel for General Law and the

applicable Private Certifier with a copy of the appeal.

(a) The Private Certifier must submit to OHA the full record upon which its decision was based within two days of receiving notification that an appeal has been filed.

(b) The Private Certifier and SBA may each elect to appear or not appear in an appeal proceeding.

(c) OHA's review is limited to the facts that were before the Private Certifier at the time of its final decision and any arguments submitted in or in response to the appeal. OHA will not consider any facts beyond those that were already presented to the Private Certifier unless the administrative judge determines that manifest injustice would occur if the appeal were limited to the record.

(d) OHA will decide whether it believes that the facts are supported by a preponderance of the evidence the Private Certifier's determination regarding ownership and control.

(e) Where the facts presented in the record leave significant doubt as to whether the petitioner is or is not owned and controlled by one or more individuals claiming to be disadvantaged, the administrative judge may remand the case to the Private Certifier for reconsideration in accord with his or her remand order.

(f) If OHA finds that the firm is owned and controlled by the individual(s) claiming disadvantaged status, OHA will refer the application to SBA for further processing. If OHA finds that the firm is not owned and controlled by such individual(s), the administrative judge will state the reasons for that decision, which will be the final decision of the Agency.

**§ 124.1010 Can a firm represent itself to be an SDB if it has not yet been certified as an SDB?**

(a) *General rule.* Except as set forth in paragraph (d) of this section, a firm may represent itself to be an SDB concern in order to receive a preference as an SDB for any Federal procurement program if it has submitted a complete application for SDB certification to SBA or a Private Certifier and it has not received a negative determination regarding that application from SBA or